



## Common Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date:	June 2, 2026
Agenda Item:	Memo re City of Whitewater MOU w/ Downtown Whitewater, Inc
Staff Contact (name, email, phone):	Mason Becker, mbecker@whitewater-wi.gov

### BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what when, where, why)

The City of Whitewater and Downtown Whitewater, Inc. (DTWW) have maintained a cooperative relationship focused on downtown revitalization since the creation of DTWW in 2006. The organization was originally established to support downtown development and promotion. Since its formation, the City Manager or designee has served on the DTWW Board of Directors to maintain coordination between the organization and the City.

In January 2021, the City and DTWW entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlined the services DTWW would provide in exchange for City financial support. The agreement identified a range of responsibilities including management of the Whitewater City Market and winter market, promotion of downtown businesses through newsletters and communications, coordination of major community events such as the Parade of Lights and Fourth of July activities, downtown beautification and cleanup efforts, and collaboration with partners such as UW-Whitewater and other local organizations. The MOU also included responsibilities related to assisting with economic development initiatives, historic preservation efforts, and communication with downtown businesses regarding grants and City projects.

The 2021 agreement also included several administrative and reporting expectations. These included quarterly reports to the Common Council, submission of annual financial and Main Street program reports, public posting of DTWW board meetings and minutes in accordance with Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, and a fundraising expectation that DTWW would work toward matching the City's financial contribution.

City staff conducted a review of the 2021 MOU and its implementation to determine which activities remain relevant and which expectations may need adjustment. That review noted that some elements of the agreement have continued to function effectively, particularly the operation of City Market events, ongoing promotional communications, and major downtown events. However, several elements of the 2021 agreement were either tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, have become outdated, or have not seen documented progress. Examples include pandemic-related programming, certain grant initiatives, and some historic preservation and community engagement initiatives. The review also noted that some reporting and administrative requirements identified in the original agreement have not consistently occurred.

Both City staff and DTWW's Executive Director and board recognized that the previous MOU was no longer tenable or realistic, given both current City needs and capacity of the DTWW organization.

Following the March 24, 2026 Finance Committee meeting, City staff have drafted a new agreement based on a "Fee for Services" model, that involves straight forward outlining of services that DTWW would provide, in exchange for set amounts to be paid for such services. Recognizing that less services and total

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initiatives are being requested of DTWW, the City proposed a reduced total contribution for the services as outlined.

The Executive Director of DTWW has reviewed the proposed agreement and stated that it is generally acceptable. The DTWW board will need to also review and approve this agreement.

It should be noted this agreement does not include the July 4<sup>th</sup> Festival, which will be held in 2026 as schedule. The Executive Director of DTWW has stated they will not have capacity to continue the event next year (separate from the parade, which is handled by the City). This has been a DTWW event for the last several years, so discontinuation of the festival or transferring of it to a new entity or group is at their discretion.

The Finance Committee has reviewed and recommended the agreement be approved by the Common Council. They also confirmed that if any changes occur to the agreement, this item does not need to come back to Finance Committee.

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**PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

(Dates, committees, action taken)

- The previous Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2021.
- The Finance Committee reviewed this item at the March 24, 2026 meeting and instructed staff to come up with a new agreement, separated from the previous MOU
- The Finance Committee recommended that the Common Council approve the proposed agreement at their May 26, 2026 meeting

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**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

(If none, state N/A)

In the city's most recent biennial budget, \$25,000.00 was budgeted as the contribution to Downtown Whitewater, Inc in both 2026 and 2027. This matches the amount that was budgeted in 2023 and 2024.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

None at this time. After the Downtown Whitewater, Inc board reviews and approves the agreement, this will come to the Common Council for final approval. DTWW's board next meets in August 2026.

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**ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED**

(If none, state N/A)

- Proposed Agreement between the City of Whitewater and Downtown Whitewater, Inc
  - 2021 Memorandum of Understanding w/ Downtown Whitewater, Inc
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